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PRACTICAL
OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

BRITISH WEST INDIA

SUGAR TRADE

1822

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

BRITISH WEST INDIA

SUGAR TRADE.

BY JAMES D. DE MULFORD, MR. CHAMBERS,
AND OTHERS.

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR.

137 Grafton St

PRACTICAL

OBSEERVATIONS



8c. 8c.

A part of Great Britain which has
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Indies is said to be experiencing
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Since the years 1806 and 1807, when the
authorities of the West Indies Trade called
for Parliamentarily, even with all
the demands of increased height and inan-
tance, there has been no bettering of de-
pression to be counteracted with the least

MERCHANT, Printer, Lower-Court, Fenchurch-Street.

PRACTICAL

OBSERVATIONS,

A PERIOD of great difficulty and distress is again experienced by the West India Proprietors; and, did it arise from the ordinary fluctuations of trade, the remedy might be left to its own operation. Since the years 1806 and 1807, when the sufferings of the West India Trade called for Parliamentary inquiry, even with all the benefits of reduced freight and insurance, there has been no period of depression to be compared with the result

MERCHANT, FIRM, LONDON-CO., LEMPSTER-GATES.

of the sales of last year has however this state of affairs arisen from temporary causes, but from a growing and permanent evil which the British West India Colonist could neither avert nor hinder. It must be admitted, in the present state of the country, no one class ought to be benefitted at the expense of another but if it can be shown that the distress of the West India Planter may be alleviated without injustice to the consumer or any great public sacrifice it is surely entitled to consideration and assistance.

It may, however, be asked why the case of the West India Planter calls for more consideration and assistance than any other class of the community? The answer is, that as a proprietor and cultivator of the soil, his situation is peculiarly different from every other and if he has

not power and resources within himself to compete with a more vigorous rival, the fault is not his own, but is attributable to the legislative infliction and restrictions to which he has been so long subjected.

It must be admitted, in this statement, that from the earliest establishment of the West India Colonies, the monopoly of supply for the home consumption, and the employment of British shipping for transporting their produce, have been rigidly adhered to, and, at some periods, manifestly to the injury of the Planter: at the same time, it was the policy of this country, in order to secure an ample and steady supply, and to give employment to British shipping and seamen, to afford every encouragement and facility to the disposal of the surplus in the continental markets, which tended to keep up an extent of production beyond what was required for the home-consumption.

Such was the state of the British West India Colonies when the abolition of the Slave Trade took place, from which time there has been no increase in their production; and, without questioning the wisdom and humanity of that measure, the effects it has subsequently produced on the West India interest may be fairly considered. In the first place, it operated as an encouragement to those foreign planters in which that traffic was still continued: by withdrawing the competition of the British Planter, they were enabled progressively advancing till they have attained an extent and cheapness of production which renders a direct competition with them utterly ruinous.

From this competition, however, the
 British Planter is so situated that he can-
 not altogether retire; his capital is sunk,
 and, as it were, immovably fixed to the
 soil he occupies; the removal of his
 negroes to more fertile situations being
 prohibited; and, whilst other cultivators
 can equalize the expenses of labour and
 cultivation to the value of the produce,
 considered. In the first place, if a planter
 the British West India Cultivator must
 as in consequence of those foreign colo-
 nies in which just justice was still con-
 tinued: by which will the cultivator
 circumstance, a population in the propor-
 tion of two hundred persons to an extent of
 land of little more than double that num-
 ber of acres, however great the loss may
 be to him.

Cups and Bissell, which have been since
 raised yet, A further consideration is the large
 amount of the duty of 27*s*. per cwt. in
 proportion to the reduced price; and,
 although it is admitted that the consumer

plays a deadly influence upon the government, but it cannot be disputed that the duty payable has increased to the point of consumption altogether, and, upon the same principle, the effect of such a heavy duty will limit consumption, by enhancing the price, is evident: for instance, the consumption of sugar in 1805, as compared with the year of consumption from 1816 to 1817, has increased, although perceptually less than twice, the average has declined so low that the consumption of sugar and molasses has almost entirely stopped, and the price has gone down to one-half, or even less; the result is 40 per cent with only an increased population induced by a fall of 25 per cent in the consumption of sugar.

Consequently, the necessitous call for sugar, under such circumstances, will be supplied by St. Croix, and, however large a surplus stock of sugar may be accumulated in this country, could not be disposed of till the price of sugar goes up to a profit in the foreign markets, which, under cover of the Amer-

Continent was enjoyed by it to the peace in 1814: independently of this circumstance, the low prices in 1806 and 1807 somewhat diminished the supply from our own colonies; and, aided by the use of sugar in the distilleries, the price advanced considerably ¹⁸⁰⁶ at the end of 1808; the gloom was dissipated, and prosperity succeeded. Now, on looking to the present state of the Sugar Market, the contingent and casual circumstances which operated to remove the distress ¹⁸⁰⁶ so loudly complained of in 1806 and 1807 do not apply; but, as to the leading fact and cause of depression, the cause is precisely the same—*That, in the disposal of our surplus stock, we are undersold in the continental markets by the foreign grower.*

In order to obtain a correct view of the extent and effect of this evil, the



Court-martial was employed partly to try the defendants.
following statements must be first considered:

	Renned Sugar Exported	Renned Sugar Consumed	Raw Sugar Consumed	Renned Sugar Consumed
1816	1,008,000	708,000	1,153,000	\$75,000
1817	1,000,000	700,000	1,151,000	1,001,000
1818	1,000,000	700,000	1,122,000	121,000
1820	1,000,000	700,000	1,120,000	120,000
1821	1,000,000	700,000	1,042,000	155,000
				2,489,000

Note—This is the same figure as in the preceding statement, but the consumption in the two last years is the same.

A very small proportion of the renned and nearly the whole of the raw sugar exported for the last four years have been sent to Ireland, which, with the direct supply,

(about 10,000 Hsgs. ready) having the con-
sumption of Ireland hhds. 100,000

Feet Pounds British Handspansal

Consumption of Great Britain

and Average Price, exclusive of
Duty.

	ST of 01 Price.	M of 01 Consumed.	Comptation in pounds of one hhd.
1815	s.	s.	
to	53 per cwt.	153,000	
1817			
			British
1818	Refined or Burnt	Raw	
to	43	180,000	
	Sugar		Comptation in pounds of one hhd.
1819	36 to 96	36 : 6	191,600
98 to 98	36 to 96	36 : 6	— 0002
98 to 96	31 to 96	36 : 6	216,000
91 to 9	9 to 10	0 : 6	

It appears, then, that the total consumption of the

United Kingdom, in 1821, was 216,000

Against the importation of this consumption, the

Leaving a surplus of 292,000 lbs. sugar, &c., &c.

We have seen that this is a considerable sum, and

we next proceed to consider the effect

of the foreign growth on the prices of the

same market, taking the 1st of Oct. each

years, the period of comparison for those years.

1808 - Teabid Brazil to nosegay
1810 - Refined Brazil East India.
Havannah.

1810 - Refined to 10 to 12 nosegay

1820 - 10 to 12 to 18 to 20 nosegay

1821 - 24 to 44 18 to 38 14 to 44

Comparative decrease in prices. 10 to 14 10 to 12 8
Gazette average. 000,081 two lbs per cwt of
Refined sugar BRITISH.

	Raw	Refined ex-Bounty star	Refined
	000,081	8d	of
Gazette average.		Single.	Dollars
1808	36 : 6	40 to 68c	68 to 88
1820	36 : 3	41 to 66	68 to 80
1821	36 : 6	31 to 58	80 to 88

Comparative decrease in prices. 6 : 0 9 to 10 6 to 12
Gazette average to nosegay

000,081 raw, 1821, mobed in U
000,081 this comparison the average fall in
000,081 sugar appears 6s. per cwt., but the
fall having taken place principally on the
fine qualities, it has not been more than
4s. per cwt. generally on the qualities
used by the refiners, whereas refined sugar
has 30s. to 36s. per cwt.

has declined in the same time 10 per cwt. on an average price, which shows that the weight of the competition, in the disposal of our surplus, has been borne principally by the refiners, whose market has been affected exactly in proportion to the decline in the prices of foreign sugar, a great part of which is imported in a white and purified state; so far, had our surplus been exported in a raw state, instead of a refined, it could not, last year, have found a market abroad at so high a price by 8s per cwt. which was obtained for it through the instrument of the Refiners.

Unwillingness to abandon the trade — which they had been long engaged, led on, by a series of some favourable change, and with a large capital embarked in a manufacture, in which stagnation is certain loss, the refiners have struggled gallantly, for three years, against increasing

difficulties, at a great sacrifice of property; till, at length, they seem to be declining the contest, in complete despair of success.

To this state of the trade, the West India Proprietors should look with the deepest apprehension; for, difficult as their case is, they may be assured, the superior skill, large capitals, and establishments of the British, render it the best of fortresses; they had better take this silent and likely, than a greater facility of intercourse with markets more plentifully abundantly supplied with sugar from more prolific sources, at a price of 25 per cent under what they can afford to sell at, will breed benefits to their British Planters? And, under this supposition, is made in their whole surplus, where should be the advantage of sending a part, which by augmenting this supply, would tend to depress prices in those countries, and

readers the competition in the disposal of the remainder will more ruinous and difficult. You have said that no sugar is to be imported.

— 1776

The truth is, that, in a raw state, the large surplus produce of our sugar colonies is no where wanted; and, if not refined in this country, it must undergo that process in some other, to adapt it to the demand; and the Planter has simply to decide whether the British or foreign refiner can do it on the best terms. With respect to this important question, the facts are obvious, that, for some years, the British refiner has given more than could be obtained abroad; particularly last year; and, although he cannot work against a difference of 25 per cent. which was then the case, there is no doubt he can compete successfully with the foreign refiner, and afford a higher price to the Planter of from 10 to 15 per cent. (the

reasons for which have been before alluded to, then there will be little to obtain generally for his surplus growth ~~of sugar~~ in any other market.

The state was a debt, or debts on T
old. The interests of the Planter and British
sugar refiner appear, therefore, to be inse-
parably united, and any means that
will support the latter will be found the
most effectual and ready means affording
relief during further difficulty oblosh of a
short period of no less than eight years.
Till the present time the British Govt. W-
anted sugar duty total of £100,000,000
and now a regular and regular diffrance
presently made of late years from 1853
now 70 millions extra which may be
partly accounted for by the fluctuations
of prices not taken out, too close periods
not to allow calculated to give relief to
the Planter in times of distress pro-
bably the present one to measure the

home consumer an ample supply of sugar at a fair moderate price, by discouraging the export when the price is high: and it is now thrown out for the judgement of those interested in the prosperity of the West India Trade, whether, by *reverting* to a scale of bounties, on the same principle, though not to the same extent, as the one preceding 1816, the ruin of many may not be averted and the sufferings of the whole alleviated:

For example, if the Gazette average price shall not

exceed		36,	per cwt.	56s.	bounty
„	36,	to	40,	„	54s.
„	40,	„	44,	„	50s.
„	44,	„	48,	„	46s.
„	48,	„	54,	„	42s.
„	54,	„	60,	„	38s.
„	60,	„	65,	„	36s.
„	65, and upwards,			none.	

Double refined 8s. more.

When the present bounty of 46s. per cwt. was fixed, in 1816, the average price was 52s. per cwt.; last year it did not exceed 32s.

The probable effect of this scale of bounty would be to fix it, *for a time*, 8s. per cwt. higher than at present, and thereby afford an aid to the Planter, at a charge of about £240,000 out of a clear revenue, raised on West India sugar, amounting to £3,750,000; nor would this measure impose on the consumer an unfair or exorbitant price, but, on the contrary, it would, in the event of a failure of crop, or any other contingency, protect him against it—the medium price for the increase of bounty of 8s. per cwt. *being no higher than the very moderate average price of 65s. per cwt. duty paid, to the consumer.*

The advantage to the Planter, however, would be very important. It should be remarked that there is no want of demand or accumulation of stock, the whole importation of sugar having been taken

off in the course of the year; it is the low price the foreign grower sells at which depresses the markets for our surplus, that is complained of, the effect being to lower the price on the whole importation to the same level, the surplus always weighing on the market till it comes down to the price the foreign buyer will give for it.

Now, the additional bounty of 8s. per cwt. would enable the refiner to give so much more to the Planter for his surplus than he otherwise could afford to do, be that price what it may, and maintain a corresponding improvement in the general market, which, on an importation of 293,000 hogsheads, would make a difference in the nett proceeds of £1,500,000 in favour of the West India Proprietors. It, however, may be supposed that this is a mere temporary expedient, and the foreign grower would continue to increase his growth and still

undersell us in the foreign markets; but this is not so clear: for, notwithstanding the high advantages he possesses over the British Planter, there is a point at which it must cease to be profitable to him to cultivate sugar; and, from the statements that have been given at different times, respecting the actual colonial charges for raising sugar in the most favourable situations, the price is now so low that it yields little or no encouragement to increase the cultivation. The effect of the additional bounty proposed would be to keep it in check, and, by limiting the extension of growth in the foreign colonies, more effectually to prevent the Slave Trade, by removing the temptation to carry it on, than by any prohibitory penal enactments.

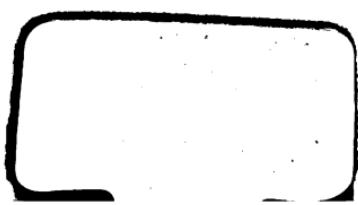
Should, however, the relief suggested not be obtained, the growth of sugar in our West India Colonies must be limited to

the home demand, which will raise the price to the consumer, occasion a loss to British shipping of a large part of the present freight, and diminish, to the same extent, the profit derived to this country from the commercial charges and export-trade to these colonies, whilst it will encourage the foreign colonists to extend their plantations to make up the deficiency which will be experienced in the continental markets by the extinction of the supply from this country, and cause them to flourish on the ruin of a large portion of the British West India Trade, and of the refinery of this country.

THE END.



MARCHANT, Printer, Ingram-Court, Fenchurch-Street.



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